



**NAPA VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Transforming lives by instilling 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and inspiring lifelong learning in every student.

September 18, 2009

The Honorable Raymond A. Guadagni  
Presiding Judge  
Superior Court of the State of California  
County of Napa  
825 Brown Street  
Napa, CA 94559

**FILED**

SEP 21 2009

Clerk of the Napa Superior Court  
By: C. Blennen  
Deputy

Dear Judge Guadagni:

The purpose of this letter is to respond to the Napa County Grand Jury report related to Napa Valley Gangs. The Napa Valley Unified School District (NVUSD) Board of Education appreciates the proactive efforts of the Grand Jury to focus energy and attention on this issue, and is committed to supporting county-wide actions to address these problems and their impact on the community in general and education in particular.

However, in the true spirit of a total community responsibility for this problem which we believe is the intent of the Grand Jury, the NVUSD Board of Education believes that many critical stakeholders were omitted from this process based on the list of stakeholders which the grand jury committee indicates were interviewed. Some examples of prominent partners who the NVUSD counts on for support with our most vulnerable populations include:

Napa Valley Community Housing Family Centers	Juvenile Justice Parent Partner Program	Clinic Ole, Your Alternatives to Risk
ParentsCAN, Parent Project	Puertas Abiertas Community Resource Center	Napa County Hispanic Network
MALDEF Parent Education	COPE, Positive Discipline	CyberMill Technology Center
On the Move, Youth Leadership Program	Napa Valley College Talent Search/Upward Bound	

We are concerned as a board that when you ask questions that come from a law enforcement perspective, it produces law enforcement answers. While we appreciate and value that perspective, we believe that an educational framing of the problem does provide a much more subtle reading of this complex issue. The NVUSD board of Education is concerned that unless the diversity of stakeholders who are on the front line in confronting these problems are consulted, important prevention efforts will be overlooked and perspectives missed. We also respectfully suggest that statements in the Grand Jury report like "the Latino leadership is disengaged" require talking to Latino leadership. Again, the grand Jury list of interviews suggests otherwise.

**Board of Education**

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It is our conviction that the best defense against gangs must involve broadening initiatives like the ones currently in place that will prepare all of our students for futures in this economic system that is brighter and more attractive than the short term allure of gangs. We hope that the Grand Jury will support these efforts by helping the entire community to work together to create a viable prevention effort.

At its meeting of September 17, 2009, the Board of Education also approved the following responses as specifically requested to Grand Jury recommendations 4, 5, 8 and 9.

#### **Grand Jury Recommendation #4**

*Grand Jury: Formalization of Processes for providing gang information to parents, students and school administrators.*

**Response:** We agree with the recommendation that we need to formalize processes for providing gang information, and a summary of items below lists those processes currently in place and those in development. The recommendation also requires further analysis in order to determine exactly what processes still need to be improved or instituted. It is our intention to collaborate with the District Attorney, law enforcement agencies, and other entities in Napa County on a study and master plan to address the gang efforts. We expect specific processes to emerge from that process that will be implemented community wide, and the district will make every effort to participate accordingly.

#### **Processes currently in place:**

- California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) is administered to 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> graders every two years. Data includes information relating to safety, physical health, substance use, violence and risk behaviors. 4 questions on the survey relate specifically to gang involvement.
- The Bi-Annual publication of CHKS summary of findings is created and made available to the community. (The current edition was distributed to school sites and community agencies and is available on the NVUSD website in English and Spanish at <http://www.nvUSD.k12.ca.us/apps/page.asp?Q=508&menu=public>.)
- Student, parent and educator informational presentations are provided by Vanessa Luna, Coordinator of the Napa County Office of Education Gang Violence Suppression Program. (GSVP). Brochures are provided on gang identification as well as other parent resources. Her role is changing for the coming year, and she will be providing a train the trainer model to build our capacity for gang awareness, and will be offering targeted assistance to high need students, parents and staff members around the county.
- A SCVP (School Community Violence Prevention) grant is in place at Valley Oak Continuation High School. The Coordinator is Oscar Vega. Valley Oak population is high risk for gang involvement.
- Second Step curriculum is in place at 11 Elementary sites; DARE is in place at 11 Elementary Sites and 10 sites implement BOTH Second Step and DARE.
- As noted in the Grand Jury report, a Color Contract with mandated parent education for identified gang members has been implemented.
- "On The Move" is engaged in a five year Career and College Readiness awareness program for parents of students traditionally not focused on high performing school goals and who are susceptible to gangs. The district will adopt more rigorous graduation standards in the fall of 2009 to support a significant system of academic interventions that have already been implemented to ensure a significantly higher level of student success.
- As budget allows we continue our funding of School Resource Officers and DARE.

### **Processes Under Development or Consideration:**

- Create a one page information sheet on "How to Keep Your Student Safe" to be included in the back-to-school packet given to NVUSD family. The sheet would include gang identification information, how to have meaningful conversations with your child on tobacco, alcohol, drug and violence prevention and tips for parents on how to keep students safe and themselves informed. A list of resources and parenting websites will be included.
- Explore planning of a student run Town Hall Meeting on Gang Prevention for 2009-2010 school year.
- Continue publication of the CHKS data to the public with wide distribution in the community. Update and publish Our Children, Our Future; a resource guide for parents, educators and the community with the data from upcoming CHKS administration. (Target date of publication to be determined, dependent on the next cycle of survey administration).

### **Grand Jury Finding #5**

Grand Jury: *Retain SRO's on campuses, as a preventative measure and to provide education to staff, and parents.*

**Response:** The district supports the recommendation and has continued to implement it. NVUSD intends to continue funding and retaining SRO's as our budget allows, and will do everything we can to work with each of our law enforcement partners to continue those efforts.

### **Grand Jury Finding # 8**

Grand Jury: *Consideration of \$34.00 per day fines, the state allocated daily allowance per student provided to public school districts, after non-response to truancy notifications.*

**Response:** The recommendation requires further analysis.

NVUSD, Child Welfare and Attendance Supervisor, Kurt Schultz researched the legality of charging \$34 per day fines and spoke on the topic with Bridget Stewart, Deputy DA. Our analysis suggests that the \$34 dollar per day recommendation is not supported by the Education Code. This issue is referenced under EC 48264.5 which indicates after a student is made ward of the court, the court can initially charge "payment of a fine by the pupil of not more than one hundred dollars, for which a parent or guardian of the pupil may be jointly liable." Infractions of truancy after that time frame can incrementally increase to a \$250 fine, and then a \$500 fine if the truancy continues through the courts. The NVUSD welfare and attendance office will continue during the 09/10 school year to explore ways to use fines or other means to impress on parents the importance of ensuring that their students are in school.

### **Grand Jury Finding # 9**

Grand Jury: *Consideration for stricter dress codes or uniforms on public school campuses.*

**Response:** The recommendation requires further analysis.

The district was involved in litigation on this issue several years ago. NVUSD will study this recommendation and bring as an agenda item during the 2009/2010 school year for NVUSD middle and high school principals. This recommendation would require widespread parent support or it could lead to significant distractions for schools and student learning. This recommendation would require widespread community support and leadership. NVUSD would need significant leadership from all community stakeholder groups based on our past experience with dress codes. We did raise the issue in our conversation with the planners working on the gang task force and would gladly work with our community on a concerted basis to implement any measures that would increase the success of all students and reduce involvement in gang activities.

Sincerely,



John Glaser  
Superintendent